

CITIZENS NETWORK FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AGRIBUSINESS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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**Report on Activities During FY 2001
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Program Goal.	1
II. Program Objectives.	1
III. Program Results.	1
IV. Development Projects.	6
V. Impact.	6
VI. Issues and Problems.	11
VII. Administration, Personnel, and Financial	13
VIII. Lessons Learned.	13
IX. Volunteer Statistics.	16
X. Public Outreach.	17
XI. Expenditures.	18

Appendices

A. USAID Indicator Tables

B. Project Impact Assessments and Host Profile Updates

1. Zimbabwe

- a. Gokwe Agrodealers
- b. Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union (ICFU)
- c. Informal Traders Association of Zimbabwe (ITAZ)
- d. Johannadale Irrigation Scheme
- e. Mashonaland East Fruit and Vegetable Growers Assn. (MEFVGA)
Chinamora branch
- f. Mhende Irrigation Scheme
- g. Mount Darwin & Rushinga Oil Pressers Association (MDROPA)
- h. Murewa Agrodealers
- i. Valley Irrigation Scheme/Fambadzanai Permaculture Center
- j. Village Producers and Processors Project (VPPP)

2. Mozambique

- a. Manica Agrodealers

C. Public Outreach articles from 2 volunteers to Southern Africa

I. PROGRAM GOAL

The goal of the CNFA Southern Africa Agribusiness Volunteer Program is for small-scale and indigenous farmers to increase their income.

II. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- A. Train the farmers to manage their farms in a more commercially oriented manner.
- B. Strengthen local commercial enterprises that will link the farmers to markets and enable them to buy the inputs, access the services, and market the crops or livestock necessary to sustain commercial production in the long run.

III. PROGRAM RESULTS

A. Program Development

CNFA is committed to making the USAID Farmer-to-Farmer program as strong and effective as possible. Given that FTF is a long-term program, CNFA is working on an ongoing basis to evaluate outcomes and develop Best Practices that can be implemented systematically to improve the program's performance in the future.

Fiscal Year 2001 was a busy year for CNFA in the area of program development. CNFA launched overlapping initiatives to strengthen its program in two important areas:

- Improving the rate of successful volunteer assignments; and
- Improving documentation of success.

- 1. Improving the rate of successful volunteer assignments:** The FTF program has two fundamental points of focus: the volunteer and the host. FTF's basic task is to *bring volunteers and hosts together in a way that consistently provides value and satisfaction to both*. Volunteers who are taking time away from their families and jobs count on CNFA to put that time to good use. Since FTF is about exchange of ideas, it is essential that hosts want to learn from the volunteers. Prospective hosts may have other priorities, for example, "getting the rich American to give them money." In CNFA's view, FTF's greatest challenge is *to locate and select hosts who will value the volunteer's time and seek to obtain as much information as possible from him/her*. Success in finding good hosts will ensure a high rate of successful, fulfilling volunteer assignments.

CNFA has over the years concentrated more and more on (a) getting to know and understand the host and his/her enterprise; and (b) monitoring the host's performance both during and following volunteer visits to assess his/her interest in the ideas and recommendations provided. In 1998, CNFA introduced an Integrated Project Design and Evaluation System (IPDES) in part to help achieve these objectives. At the beginning of FY01, CNFA implemented a *new, improved version of IPDES*.

The new IPDES has three elements beyond traditional FTF volunteer assignment scopes of work that CNFA has concluded are essential for assessing hosts and ensuring consistently fulfilling volunteer assignments:

- (1) *Host Profile*: The HP records essential information about the host and his/her activities relevant to the training to be provided. CNFA prepares the initial HP prior to the first volunteer assignment to a host first to enable CNFA to evaluate the host and reach a preliminary conclusion that he/she will value the volunteer's training (the HP also serves to provide prospective volunteers a full picture of the host in preparation for their assignment, and to provide CNFA a baseline against which to measure host development and FTF impact over time). Annual updates of the HP provide quantitative data on the host's activities in areas related to volunteer training, i.e., confirmation of the extent to which the training is producing positive impact.
- (2) *Volunteer Trip Reports and Volunteer Assignment Report*: CNFA requests each volunteer to submit a report following his/her assignment summarizing what happened and listing recommendations both for the host relative to his/her future development and for CNFA relative to management of future volunteer assignments to that host. Based on the volunteer's report and their debriefing of the hosts following the assignment, CNFA field staff prepare a brief Volunteer Assignment Report documenting the achievements of the assignment and listing possible impacts from it.
- (3) *Project Impact Assessment*: Prepared one year after the initiation of training in conjunction with an update of the HP (and annually thereafter), the PIA analyzes the data in the HP and assesses the extent to which the FTF project has changed people's lives. The PIA refers to the update HP to determine the extent to which the impacts that were predicted prior to and immediately following the volunteer training (documented in a Project Strategy, Volunteer Assignment Scopes of Work, volunteer trip reports, and Volunteer Assignment Reports) have been achieved.

2. **Improving documentation of impact**: It is essential that any development program self-monitor and document its performance and results. USAID has recognized this imperative in the FTF program for the past several years by requiring implementers to complete a set of *Indicator Tables* annually providing information about impact. CNFA has been working steadily to establish a *system* for generating data on host development to support estimation of impact and completion of the USAID Indicator Tables. CNFA's introduction of the new Integrated Project Development and Evaluation System at the beginning of FY01 was the culmination of years of experience with and deliberation about effective impact assessment in the FTF program. As described above, IPDES aims to strengthen CNFA's ability to select good hosts for its volunteer assignments. In addition, however, IPDES is a comprehensive system for planning, directing, and assessing FTF volunteer assignments and generating *empirical, verifiable* impact data. Although CNFA is still in the process of standardizing its procedures in regard to preparation of PIAs and the AID Indicator Tables, its policy is that *it will not claim impact in the AID Indicator Tables unless there is quantitative data in the HP to support it*.

IPDES is not only innovative as a structure for FTF program management; it also incorporates two innovative new analytical tools:

- sorting impacts by level; and
- the "Number of People Whose Lives Were Improved" chart.

Sorting Impacts By Level: As part of IPDES, CNFA has introduced an analytical tool that it has found to be extremely valuable in analyzing project impact. This is the concept of *levels of impact*. Impacts obviously vary in significance. The fact that a host farmer implements a new fertilization program recommended by a volunteer is certainly a positive impact that warrants recording, but the volunteers, CNFA, and USAID are also interested in whether the farmer's implementation of this fertilization program and other recommendations by volunteers result more broadly in an increase in his/her family's income or other improvements in their lives. Seeking an answer to this question requires some systematic analysis. To provide a structure for this analysis, CNFA's IPDES has adopted the practice of sorting impacts by level:

- Level I: Host performs specific acts using the information/ skills provided by the volunteer.
- Level II: Intermediate impacts (link Level I to Level III).
- Level III: Improvements in the lives of host people (usually an increase in income).

As stated above, the goal of CNFA's FTF Program is to increase people's incomes. In other words, CNFA is dedicated to achieving Level III impact. By listing and sorting the impacts that it is achieving in its various project documents, CNFA aims to help its staff, the hosts, and the volunteers stay focused on the overall goal of the project and see clearly how the specific training each volunteer provides ultimately contributes to it.

The "Number of People Whose Lives Improved" Chart: Very recently, at the end of FY01, CNFA added one additional element to the IPDES system, even though AID does not require it, aimed at strengthening documentation of impact. This is the "Number of People Whose Lives Were Improved " or LI chart. If the PIA reports that Level III impact (people's lives improved) has been achieved, then it is logical to go one step further and estimate – *also based on empirical data in the HP* -- the number of people who have achieved it. Developing such estimates will also enable CNFA to synthesize the overall impact of its program. The following table provides the first-ever empirically based estimate of the impact of CNFA's Agribusiness Volunteer Program in terms of number of people whose lives have been improved:

Number Of People Whose Lives Were Improved			
FY01	Large Improvement	Small Improvement	Total
Directly Improved	794	1,181	1,975
Indirectly Improved	62	423	485
Total	856	1,604	2,460

It is important to note that the data in this chart are quite preliminary and partial. First, they are based entirely on data in Project Impact Assessments and Host Profile updates, and CNFA prepared PIAs and HP only on projects at least one year old, so all volunteer training projects begun during FY01 are excluded. Second, CNFA's field offices were only asked to develop this data at the end of the year and not all project HPs contained data to support estimating numbers of people very well. Such projects are also excluded from these data. Given these large exclusions, it is significant that the numbers of lives impacted are as large as they are. CNFA intends to concentrate on including indicators of lives impacted in all of its HPs for FY02 and will have more comprehensive and reliable data for the LI chart in next year's report.

How Reliable Are the Data?: Some people have questioned whether the impact data IPDES is producing are reliable. Particularly with the limited resources available under the FTF program for impact monitoring, it will generally be impossible to obtain fully comprehensive, objective data on impact. Moreover, even where comprehensive data collection is possible, the cause-effect relationship between volunteer training and observed improvement in hosts' lives will often be less than clear-cut. Just because perfection is impossible, however, does not mean that there can be no benefit from a limited, less-than-perfect effort. CNFA is testing the hypothesis that *an educated guess based on systematic sampling of results and comparison against baseline data* can produce valuable data on impact. CNFA is attaching to this report not only its completed AID Indicator Tables, but also all of the project HPs and PIAs that it has completed so far so that readers can evaluate IPDES for themselves. Readers are invited to glance especially at the discussion of the LI chart in a few of the PIAs to see how the numbers in the chart were estimated.

Can FTF support IPDES?: Some people have also questioned whether, even if IPDES is deemed to be effective and valuable, FTF programs have the resources to support so elaborate a system. CNFA has only 12 months' experience with IPDES so far, so its conclusion is preliminary, but that conclusion is affirmative. First, field staff report that, although it is demanding, the new IPDES' tabular format and emphasis on brevity are more manageable than the original one. Second, experience is revealing additional areas for streamlining that CNFA is pursuing. Particularly considering IPDES' benefits -- (a) a much stronger foundation for sorting out which prospective hosts will value the volunteer's time and seek to obtain as much information as possible from him/her and thus for CNFA to fulfill its *obligation to its volunteers to provide them fulfilling experiences*; and (b) (if confirmed by experience) a much more reliable foundation for measuring impact -- CNFA is increasingly optimistic that the costs of IPDES will prove reasonable and bearable.

3. **Conclusion:** In the area of FTF program development, FY01 was a very active year for CNFA. Introduction of the new Integrated Project Development and Evaluation System provided dramatic improvements in the management of the CNFA Agribusiness Volunteer Program. Although assessment of IPDES's value remains preliminary, most CNFA staff members, both headquarters and field, have expressed enthusiasm for it, and CNFA intends to concentrate over the coming year on using it to improve the quality of its FTF projects,

raising the level of volunteer and host satisfaction with the program, and delivering more reliable data on program impact.

B. Program Implementation

Overview

During the reporting period, CNFA completed 27 volunteer assignments across Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia. CNFA missed its work plan target of 30 assignments for the year due primarily to the political upheaval currently occurring in Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, CNFA volunteers:

- Trained members of the Seke Association, Mhende Irrigation Scheme and MDROPA to strengthen their grass roots structures and develop the association leadership.
- Assisted members of Chinamora Fruit and Vegetable Producers (MEFVP), and the Valley Irrigation Scheme, gain access to new markets and establish buyer contracts for cash crops such as paprika and tomatoes
- Worked with members of the Small Scale Beekeepers Association of Zimbabwe (SBAZ), to develop the skills needed to make the association successful.
- Strengthened the Farm Business Management skills of the two women groups that make up VPPP – Village Producers and Processors Project.
- Helped Valley IS, ICFU and Smallholder Beekeepers Association of Zimbabwe (SBAZ) develop farmer training materials to be administered internally by member trainers.

In Mozambique, CNFA volunteers:

- Conducted business management training based on modules developed by a previous CNFA volunteer to three agrodealer / retailer groups across two provinces.

In Zambia, CNFA volunteers:

- Worked with Peace Corps assisted farmer associations, as part of the Rural Aquaculture Program (RAP), in Leadership Development and Strategic Planning. This forms part of the Peace Corps partnership initiated last year.

External Evaluation

CNFA commissioned PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) to conduct an evaluation report of the SAAVP, the draft of which was submitted at the end of the year. The report includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of targeting smallholder farmers, SAAVP achievements in sustainable development practice and a revision of the documentation system referred to above.

CNFA HQ and Field staff will conduct an internal assessment of the report during November 2001, however some of the major issues are raised in the discussion and lessons learned sections of this report.

IV. DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Current Projects	Number of Volunteers		
	Previous Years	Current Year	Total
ITAZ	6	2	8
VPPP	3	2	5
Valley Irrigation Scheme	2	2	4
Seke MEFVP	5	2	7
Chinamora MEFVP	5	1	6
Murewa Agrodealers	5	0	5
Gokwe	5	0	5
Mhende	3	1	4
MDROPA	2	1	3
Johannadale Irrigation Sch.	6	0	6
ICFU	17	4	21
SBAZ	0	2	2
Mat N Agrodealers	0	2	2
<u>Mozambique</u>			
Manica 1	6	0	6
Manica 2	1	3	4
Sofala 1	0	2	2
<u>Zambia</u>			
RAP Fisheries	0	2	2
Zambian Women	5	1	6
Total	71	27	98

V. IMPACT

(Note: The impact of volunteer training occurs over time. CNFA therefore waits 12 months following its first volunteer assignment to a project to conduct a Project Impact Assessment. The impact data reported in this section are drawn exclusively from the PIAs (and Host Profile updates upon which the PIAs are based) completed during FY01 (all attached for reference as appendices to this report). This means that there are no impact data for projects for which no PIA has been completed and the lists of projects in these charts differ from that in the table above. For projects that were initiated in FY01, CNFA will prepare a PIA and report impacts beginning in FY02.)

1. Number of People Whose Lives Were Improved

Project	Large Improvement		Small Improvement		TOTAL
	Directly Improved	Indirectly Improved	Directly Improved	Indirectly Improved	
Objective 1: Train the farmers to manage their farms in a more commercially oriented manner.					
MEFVGA Chinamora	No data	No data	No data	No data	
Valley Irr. Scheme/Fambadzanai	400	-	-	-	400
ITAZ	199	-	300	360	859
Mhende Irrigation Scheme	-	-	268	-	268

MDROPA	92	-	13	-	105
Johannadale Irrigation Scheme	-	-	-	63	63
ICFU	40	-	600	-	640
Objective 2: Strengthen local commercial enterprises that will link the farmers to markets and enable them to buy the inputs, access the services, and market the crops or livestock necessary to sustain commercial production in the long run.					
VPPP	45	60	-	-	105
Murewa Agrodealers	10	-	-	-	10
Gokwe Agrodealers	8	2	-	-	10
Manica Agrodealers	No data	No data	No data	No data	
Total	794	62	1181	423	2460

This information is based on data collected from the Host Profiles and Project Impact Assessment performed at the close of the reporting period. It does not necessarily represent information pertaining to volunteer assignments conducted this year but should be viewed as a first time revision of all assignments over 12 months old, regardless if they received volunteer assistance during the reporting period. Information relating to how individual data was collected is contained in the attached Project Impact Assessments. During FY02, the Project Strategy will include a section to determine the anticipated number of people whose lives will be improved by specific interventions. By the annual review of the Project Impact Assessment, we will better be able to evaluate how effective intervention has been against real value impact results.

Differentiating between 'Direct' and 'Indirect' and 'Large' and 'Small' improvements also depicts the overall health of particular group or project. While it is imperative to understand how CNFA relates to specific targets, it is important to assess an overall well being especially in times of declining economies, when overall economic health is subject to massive fluctuations that can be 'uncontrollable'.

USAID INDICATOR TABLES

Table V: Hosts with Improved Business Operations as a Result of Grantee/Volunteer Assistance	Table VI: Hosts with Improved Organizational Capacity as a Result of Grantee/Volunteer Assistance	Table VII: Hosts with Improved Services to Membership/Employees as a Result of Grantee/ Volunteer Assistance	Table VIII: Host with Improved Financial Services to the Agricultural Sector as a Result of Grantee/ Volunteer Assistance	Table IX: Hosts with Improved Use and/ or Protection of the Environment as a Result of Grantee/ Volunteer Assistance
A. Number of Hosts providing new or improved products and/ or services. 1. Valley IS 2. Mhende IS 3. Murewa Agrodealers 4. Gokwe Agrodealers 5. ICFU National 6. ICFU Mash East 7. ICFU Mat North 8. Johannadale IS	A. Number of organizations formed as a result of grantee/volunteer intervention. 1. Murewa Agrodealers 2. Gokwe Agrodealers	A. Number of hosts that have successfully intervened on behalf of members with government or business. 1. ICFU Natoinal 2. ICFU Mash East 3. ICFU Mat North 4. Mhende IS	A. Number of hosts with an increased number of agricultural related loans. None	A. Number of hosts adopting one or more practices to improve waste or pollution management. None
B. Number of hosts with production increases over pre-assignment levels. 1. MEFVGA Chinamora 2. Mhende IS	B. Number of hosts using new or improved planning techniques, program methodologies, and/or management practices, including the use of a business plan or a strategic plan. 1. ICFU National 2. ICFU Mash East 3. ICFU Mat North 4. ITAZ 5. MFPA 6. Mupambatye Women 7. Munhuwapayi Women 8. MDROPA 9. Valley IS 10. Fambadzanai 11. MEFVGASeke 12. MEFVGA Chinamora 13. Murewa Agrodealers 14. Gokwe Agrodealers	B. Number of hosts with new training courses or new subject matter for courses to use with membership or associates. 1. ICFU National 2. ICFU Mash East 3. ICFU Mat North 4. ITAZ 5. Murewa Agrodealers 6. Valley IS 7. Fambadzanai	B. Number of hosts with loan delinquency rate < 10%. None	B. Number of hosts adopting one or more practices to improve natural resources management (soil, water, forest, grazing lands, national parkland, etc.) None
C. Number of hosts with increased business efficiency or resource conservation. 1. MDROPA 2. Mhende IS 3. Murewa Agrodealers 4. Gokwe Agrodealers	C. Number of hosts with increased revenue/resources through new grants and/or increased fees. 1. Gokwe Agrodealers 2. Murewa Agrodealers 3. ICFU National 4. MDROPA	C. Number of hosts with improved training materials and skills. 1. ICFU National 2. ICFU Mash East 3. ICFU Mat North 4. Valley IS 5. Fambadzanai	C. Number of hosts that provide improved banking services to the agricultural sector. None	

D. Number of hosts receiving increased revenue/resources through increased sales receipts as a result of grantee/volunteer intervention. 1. MEFVGA Chinamora 2. Mhende IS 3. Murewa Agrodealers 4. Gokwe Agrodealers 5. MFPA 6. Munhuwepayi Women 7. Mupambatye Women	D. Number of hosts that have increased their membership as a result of grantee/volunteer interventions. 1. ICFU National 2. ICFU Mash East 3. ICFU Mat North 4. ITAZ 5. MDROPA		D. Number of hosts with an increase in Enterprise Portfolio Value (microfinance loans) None	
E. Number of hosts with increased profits. 1. Murewa Agrodealers 2. Gokwe Agrodealers 3. ICFU Mash East 4. MFPA 5. Mupambatye Women 6. Munhuwepayi Women 7. Valley IS 8. Johannadale IS 9. Mhende IS 10. MEFVGA Chinamora 11. MEFVGA Seke				

DISCUSSION

First and foremost, SAAVP is a volunteer program and the effectiveness of using volunteer trainers impacts on the overall program goal. The PWC Evaluation Report highlighted issues that CNFA can certainly improve on, but also testifies that CNFA has effectively developed training models and methodology that contribute to USAID objectives and sustainable development.

CNFA's primary objective is to increase the incomes of smallholder farmers via volunteer training. Eleven of the seventeen hosts CNFA worked with this year were able to demonstrate that their members have increased their incomes. In Zimbabwe, the inflation problem has made it especially difficult for farmers to realize increasing profits, because money is losing value so quickly. Chronic fuel shortages have also been especially hard on farmers, because they have difficulty transporting the fruits of their labor to market. It is in this climate of increasing unemployment, inflation and economic uncertainty that more and more Zimbabweans are turning to self-employment or collaborative action to earn income. Ironically, there has been one macroeconomic problem that has actually benefited Zimbabwe's farmers: the lack of hard currency for purchase of imports has created an increasing pressure for internal production of foods and goods. In general, CNFA's training on business and association has become even more critical in the current context, and CNFA is pleased with its ability to help the majority of its hosts' members achieve improvement in their lives despite the falling general economy.

The following discussion addresses specific strategies CNFA has adopted in FY01 and the impact of those strategies on farmers' lives:

Marketing Training

CNFA has begun helping many of its farmer associations form internal marketing committees. These committee members (usually elected by their peers) learn how to write a marketing plan, conduct basic market research, contact buyers, negotiate contracts, organize production and delivery among membership to fulfill the contract, arrange for transport of the produce and receive payment from the buyers. The groups that have already demonstrated a remarkable improvement in their ability to do collective marketing include Valley Irrigation Scheme/Fambadzanai Permaculture Center, the Chinamora branch of MEFVGA, Mhende Irrigation Scheme (training prior to FY01), Johannadale Irrigation Scheme (training prior to FY01) and ICFU Mashonland East branch. CNFA has provided similar marketing training to ITAZ, but it is too soon to measure impact. MDROPA and the Seke branch of MEFVGA had similar assignments planned for FY01, but these assignments were put on hold due to political uncertainties near both these project locations.

In each of these successful associations, what had often been lacking in the groups prior to CNFA assistance was the *confidence* that the farmers themselves could market their own produce and negotiate with the “big-time” buyers who are generally located in big cities. After visiting with buyers, accompanied at first by CNFA volunteers, these marketing committees learned that it is not so difficult to identify and negotiate with buyers, and they have begun regularly doing this activity on their own now.

Training Material Development

In FY01, CNFA has also begun ambitiously using volunteers to develop training materials that are left with the host organizations so that the hosts can continue administering the training after the CNFA volunteers are gone [USAID indicator Tables VII (b) and (c)]. The hosts are trained not only in the subject matter contained within the training manual, but also in how to administer a sustainable internal training service. The hosts that have received such assistance include ICFU (National level, Mash East and Mat North branches), Valley Irrigation Scheme/Fambadzanai Permaculture Center, the Smallholder Beekeepers Association of Zimbabwe and the Manica Agrodealers (impact has not yet been reported for the SBAZ nor the Manica Agrodealers, since the projects are both less than 1 year old).

The results thus far have been very encouraging. The cultural heritage in Southern Africa in which people are accustomed to helping one another facilitates this kind of work. Farmer trainers at the Valley Irrigation Scheme/Fambadzanai Permaculture Center; and at the SBAZ have eagerly begun training their fellow farmers in farm business management. CNFA will be able to more fully report on the long-term impact of these internally-administered trainings in the following report.

General

By using the IPDES, constantly reviewing and updating, CNFA will continue to understand the changing needs of our partners and be flexible in approach to service those needs. The standardized format of the Volunteer Assignment Report will provide solid narrative information for successive volunteers. The organization of resource libraries in both DC and the field, assists volunteers to locate cultural and country specific information, prior to departure. These can be

maintained and updated to include project information for specific training assignments in the future.

A point raised in the Evaluation Report is in the identification of host organizations and on what basis those groups are selected. The introduction of the Host Profile and Project Impact Assessment in particular, gives a clearer understanding of *HOW* and *IF* CNFA volunteers can deliver the kind of technical assistance needed. With proven methodology and the knowledge that volunteers work, SAAVP must enter the next year focusing on projects that have demonstrated commitment and development, and identify new groups that have a real opportunity to make farming a successful business.

COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

Peace Corps Zambia

The first year of partnership with Peace Corps Zambia has seen 2 volunteer assignments completed. CNFA assistance has focused on the RAP – Rural Aquaculture Program, and has provided one workshop on leadership and organizational development and the other on strategic action planning. Volunteers work with farm associations that receive technical aquaculture assistance from on-site PC volunteers. Two further assignments are planned for Q1 of FY02.

The partnership has worked effectively and enables the participant access to a wider range of training skills. CNFA volunteers can also provide mentoring support to the PCV and bring fresh ideas and updated technology. There are logistics and budgeting issues that still need to be addressed, and CNFA will aim to significantly reduce in-country costs and labor output during FY02.

Mozambique

CNFA continued to strengthen collaboration with SEMOC, the state limited seed supply company. SEMOC has been instrumental in identifying local agro-dealers and has provided some logistical support for volunteer assignments. Through this partnership, it may be possible for CNFA to work directly with SEMOC and other input suppliers, to develop their client education programs in the future.

VI. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

In Zimbabwe, economic and political instability created severe problems for the agricultural sector and consequently, many AVP host organizations. The year closed with very high inflation, the reintroduction of price controls on basic commodities and the deployment of the army in many rural areas, to uphold state run pricing structures. In addition:

- The manufacturing sector reported reduced outputs as war veterans took over many factories

- War veterans also interfered with farming activities, which has resulted in an estimated 200,000Mt shortfall in maize production.
- Lack of foreign currency due to the reduced manufacturing output has resulted in the high cost of basic commodities. The Government refused to de-value the Zimbabwe dollar during the tobacco season, also resulting in a lack of foreign currency on the export market.
- At the close of the year, the Government legislated that farmers could only sell maize and grain to the state run Grain Marketing Board, at up to 20% less than market price. This has resulted in many farmers hoarding stocks, thus reducing the quantity of grain available to the public and, those who have been forced to sell, operating at a loss on the year-end.
- Urban migration is on the increase as unemployment rises in the agricultural sector, which leaves many farms unattended and defunct for the season.

How have these socio-economic patterns affected SAAVP? At the close of the year, 2 projects (MDROPA and Seke), were put on hold due to political disturbance and deemed 'unsafe' for volunteers. Other volunteers had to be accompanied by field staff for the duration of their assignment, bearing an enormous strain on the field office resources and increasing the overall cost of the volunteer assignment.

Regular site visits were also affected, as many of the host groups felt unable to meet for fear of reprisals from local authorities. The cancellation and postponement of some assignments, also affected the continuity of the training and meant that time-specific training was undertaken at less than optimum time.

In order to limit the interruption of assignments during FY02, CNFA will identify host groups in 'safe' areas and focus training that can manage sustainable and measurable impact. This will mean that field staff will undertake to visit with host groups throughout the first half of FY02, with a view to reviving a mid-term project strategy after the elections.

CNFA presence in Mozambique has strengthened and continues to be one of only a handful of non-governmental organizations working directly with agro-dealers. While many programs focus on association and producer development, CNFA provides much-needed technical assistance to the burgeoning private sector. However, there are inherent problems in the country that has made the assignments more difficult. Dealers' access to credit is very limited outside of sale or return credit from the supply companies, as the MF sector is as yet undeveloped. The suppliers themselves have only a limited stock and during the first months of the year, there was a critical shortage of seed across the country.

Low literacy levels (86% non-literacy rates at the 1997 census), means that many dealers do not have the basic foundation to keep and maintain store records, develop written business plans or access bank loans. Although the CNFA business training material (developed in Zimbabwe) has been adapted to Portuguese, many dealers found the budget forecasting and business planning sections too advanced. CNFA will need to develop materials that use a range of teaching media and distribute those to volunteers in preparation for their assignments.

The geographical spread of the dealers is so great, that it requires intensive pre-assignment set up by field staff. The lack of a permanent partner / host organization also means that field staff spend the entire duration of the assignment with the volunteer. While SEMOC has assisted with group identification, there is a need to develop a close working partnership with the public, private or non-governmental sectors to establish CNFA Mozambique as *the* technical service provider.

Lack of transparency and democratic intervention has seen the suspension of the *Zambian Women in Agriculture* project during FY01. It was noted that many of the previous volunteers' recommendations in terms of leadership development had not been implemented, and that the membership were not receiving any benefits. A further request for assistance was received in August 2001 and CNFA field staff will resume talks with ZWIA and attempt to identify other local groups during the first half of FY02. Successful collaboration with Peace Corps Zambia, has lead CNFA to assume that emphasis on technical and business management training to the small holder farmer can be productive and essential in Zambia, and that CNFA will continue to target rural groups there. Once again, the identification of a permanent local partner primarily with the assistance of PC, will significantly reduce per-assignment costs and allow for greater expansion and continuity of the *Zambian* component.

VII. ADMINISTRATION, PERSONNEL, AND FINANCIAL

Tracy Slaybaugh Mitchell left the CNFA Southern Africa office after 5 years, and was replaced by Nicky Benn, who joined the CNFA team at the close of the fiscal year.

Discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture in Zimbabwe were still under way to finalize CNFA's registration as a development organization in Zimbabwe.

VIII. LESSONS LEARNED

FY01 has been a critical year for SAAVP. Many of the original projects have reached the end of training and the search for new partners begins; the integration of the IPDES has illustrated the effectiveness of the CNFA methodology but also highlighted how much further there is to go. The evaluation report has demonstrated strong institutional capacity but also warned of spreading capacity too thinly.

Evaluation Report

Included in the Terms of Reference is a section on how the volunteer program can be made more effective. Some of the key suggestions included:

Effectiveness of strengthening groups rather than individuals – As the PWC report correctly points out, groups are by their nature a diverse set of people who have a common objective but not necessarily the same intent, ability or commitment to achieve. Group impact relies on trained members to pass on and use the training for the benefit of the whole. However, if the group does not adhere to fundamental collective principles such as democracy, responsive leadership and transparency, then no matter how good the training, the impact will be reduced. We need to

make greater use of the Host Profile when identifying potential groups. We need to assess the group dynamics and make an informed decision of our anticipated impact before work begins. We have proven success in transforming ‘weak’ groups but there has to be a basis with which to start.

A good example of CNFA’s encounter with difficult group dynamics is with its agrodealer association projects. The PWC report points out that it is counter-intuitive for CNFA to try to form groups amongst competitors such as the agrodealers. CNFA has had quite a bit of success in administering business skills training to groups of agrodealers all over Zimbabwe, but it remains to be seen whether CNFA’s goal of helping the agrodealers to form unified regional associations will be viable. For example, one project that CNFA had initiated in the Manica Province of Mozambique to form an association of agrodealers failed, apparently because the obstacles of large distance between the agrodealers and transport difficulties outweighed the benefits the agrodealers would gain by working together. CNFA has cancelled further work on forming the Manica Agrodealer project. In the Matebeleland North province of Zimbabwe, CNFA has a new project to help agrodealers in the region to form buying groups in order to access inputs. The agrodealers in this region have had difficulty accessing credit and supply routes from the supply companies because the agrodealers are so remote and they operate such small shops. These agrodealers have received training from CNFA’s RAISE course on business management, and are very anxious to begin accessing higher quantities of inputs for resale. CNFA will report on impact for this assignment in the following report.

CNFA can conclude from these experiences with the agrodealers and with all its groups that it is important to weigh the relative costs and benefits of working together for each specific group before encouraging them to work together as an association. If there is an obvious and easily surmountable way for the group members to collaborate in order to achieve mutual self-interest, then the inherent and clear mutual goals will facilitate positive group dynamics, and CNFA will have a group that is ripe for learning about how to organize successful group ventures.

The effectiveness of strengthening farming associations – This really highlights how effective and vital institutional capacity building can be. While we need to focus more directly on the selection of host groups, we also need to ensure that training is delivered to the right people at the right time. The point is made in the PWC report that while training the association leadership in “Leadership Development,” if that leadership is not committed to benefiting the whole, then the recommendations will not be implemented. This is best illustrated by the Mashonaland East Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (MEFVGA) and the Mount Darwin and Rushinga Oil Pressers Association (MDROPA). These are two hosts that had been receiving heavy donor subsidies prior to CNFA intervention, and CNFA was called to work with these organizations when donors were planning to, or had recently, pulled out and left the hosts without know-how about running the associations on their own. Often, this donor pull-out left the groups in a disastrous financial and managerial situation, and this context of disorganization and lack of action bred feelings of mistrust and antipathy amongst leaders and members. CNFA envisioned getting leaders and members to take the full initiative for the success of the organization on their own, but commitment to this strategy was often lacking from the organizations themselves.

Therefore, CNFA decided to change its strategy in working with such organizations in FY01. In the case of MEFVGA Chinamora/Seke branches, MDROPA and the Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union (ICFU), CNFA decided to work directly at the grassroots level of the farmers themselves, as opposed to working with regional or national-level leaders, who had often done very little with training from previous CNFA volunteers. The new strategy seems to be working quite well, with farmer members learning to take full responsibility for the success of *their* organizations. CNFA's efforts with the ICFU have been uniquely focused at two provincial branches of ICFU in both FY00 and FY01, and those two branches have shown a consistently high level of commitment and adoption of training from CNFA volunteers [see USAID indicator tables V (a), (e); VI (a), (b) and (d); and VII (a), (b) and (c)]. At MEFVGA Chinamora and MDROPA, farmers have learned how to develop meaningful member services such as a marketing service. The Chinamora farmers have successfully begun marketing with the new knowledge about developing group and individual-level marketing plans [USAID indicator tables V (b), (d), (e)]. At MEFVGA Seke, however, CNFA still has not achieved real empowerment at the grassroots level. Three assignments have been conducted at Seke related to grassroots and leadership development, yet still a significant share of the 750 members are not aware that this training took place. MDROPA, ICFU and the Informal Traders Association of Zimbabwe (ITAZ) have embarked on aggressive membership campaigns to attract more members and funds in order to grow their capacity to provide meaningful member services [USAID indicator tables VI (d)]. Unfortunately, the MDROPA project and the Seke branch of MEFVGA are both in politically sensitive areas, so CNFA has put its work on hold there for the time being.

Keeping the message consistent – This issue has been raised by some participants as they find it hard to fully understand a concept, when each volunteer teaches them something different. Although one of the great benefits of having volunteers is exposure to different methodology and ideas, unless there is a standard and focused message running throughout, the full impact is lost. If we take marketing for example, there is plenty of scope for creating new models and each volunteer can bring fresh ideas to each stage of the project. Bookkeeping however, requires a standardized format that each volunteer builds upon throughout the project. We should identify those areas that need a uniform approach. We should provide intensive background information to successive volunteers as to how the area was tackled previously and what type or method of example, bookkeeping, is being taught. Developing training manuals that cover the basic steps, particularly in financial management, may be the answer. Also including at least one day 'test revision' at the start of the assignment so that the volunteer has a better idea of what the group knows or has remembered in reality, as opposed to information gained from the Scope of Work or PIA.

Volunteer Preparation – In order to implement these suggestions, we need to ensure that volunteers receive comprehensive background information prior to arrival in country. More effort should be given over to understanding the difference between US business structure and the family business structures that exist all over Africa. Once again, this comes down to identifying how best the volunteer can be used and what we can realistically achieve with the assignment. Areas that address the economic improvement of peoples lives, for example record keeping or contract negotiations are where a volunteer's objectivity and technical skill are invaluable. Areas that revolve around socio-cultural traditions (e.g. How to account for unpaid

family labor) are best handled by local field staff with comprehensive documentary back up. We need to focus the areas of technical assistance particularly with emerging groups. Instead of attempting to develop a business plan and marketing strategy over one assignment, focus in on one or two areas that we know the groups will follow up on. Spending an entire assignment on record keeping which every group member continues to use by the time the next volunteer arrives, will be more impacting than having to always dedicate some time each assignment to implementing previous recommendations.

Overall

CNFA continues to review the documentation system to enhance the potential of field staff and volunteers and create maximum impact. Whilst SAAVP is still work in progress, enormous inroads have been made throughout the year, to maximize capacity and learn lessons that help shape the future.

Creating a stronger presence in the region and identifying local partners and trainers, will also enable SAAVP to focus on which assignments and in what areas we can deliver the greatest impact.

The major obstacle for FY02 will be identifying how CNFA can maintain a high standard of volunteer and field support in the face of declining economies and continue to benefit the primary program goal to increase the commercialization of farming operations and increase rural incomes.

IX. VOLUNTEER STATISTICS

Volunteer	Home State	Number of Previous Assignments on Project	Volunteer's Valuation of Time Donated
Zimbabwe			
Frank Townsend	SC	0	8700.00
Boyd Wolff	PA	1	8300.00
Don Huber	UT	0	7789.00
Bob Cole	NC	0	12785.00
Andrew Cleveland	IN	0	2675.00
Tony Trimble	IL	0	3001.00
Betty Houbion	IL	0	24669.64
Pete Wotowiec	TN	1	6075.00
Christine Wotowiec	TN	0	2254.29
Julie Stephens	IL	1	1597.50
Jeff Missling	ND	0	5805.00
Dr. Robert Buker	WA	0	17303.57
Diane Kaufmann	IL	3	1275.00
Pat Rowe	ID	0	8370.00
Harry Carey	PA	0	8212.50
Velma Gwishiri	NC	2	2557.00
Bill Saxer	IL	1	8750.00

Zacch Olorunnipa	FL	0	5241.96
Jim Heck	PA	0	3089.29
TOTAL: 19			138,450.75
Mozambique			
Warren Schauer	MI	0	3985.71
Lewis Dow	ME	1	2192.86
Richard LaRoche	ME	0	4100.00
Jess Brown	CA	3	10750.00
Tyson Vander Wilt	WI	0	2267.86
TOTAL: 5			23,296.43
Zambia			
Louise Swartzwalder	MD	1	2925.71
Dan Buker	WA	0	3628.57
Regis Prevot	ME	0	3450.00
TOTAL: 3			10,004.46
TOTAL: 27			171,751.46

	Total Volunteers	Repeat Volunteers	First Time Volunteers	Women
Zimbabwe	19	6	13	5
Mozambique	5	2	3	0
Zambia	27	9	2	1
Total	27	9	18	6

X. PUBLIC OUTREACH

CNFA volunteers are active in a wide array of public outreach activities that not only promote the AVP program, but also USAID's funding of such programs. In 2001, Worldwide volunteers spoke at 52 club/association meetings, wrote or were the subjects of 10 news articles, one was the subject of a radio show. The predominance of meetings as an outreach activity is due largely to the pre-existing memberships in affiliation groups, which offer volunteers a large selection of venues. These meetings also are best suited to the face-to-face, community sensibilities of our volunteers. Overall, WW volunteers reached an audience of 2,291 in these meetings.

Some particularly interesting outreach activities that CNFA volunteers have been involved with:

- At the 2001 Annual Eastern Apiculture Society of North America meeting this past August, Zimbabwe/Ukraine volunteer Bob Cole made a speech entitled "Honey Bees in Developing Nations" to an audience of about 600, in which he spoke in depth about his experience as a CNFA volunteer.

- Zimbabwe volunteer Zacch Olorunnipa was a featured speaker on the Florida A&M University World Food Day panel in October, where he spoke about the work he did with CNFA in the Mutare and Mutoko districts, and the expected impact that CNFA and USAID hope to see in Zimbabwe.
- Chicago suburban newspaper *The News Sun* published a lengthy article on volunteer Betty Houbion's experience in Nyamutumbu, Zimbabwe. In it, she mentions how the USAID funded AVP program is capitalizing on the industriousness of the Zimbabwean people to help spur agricultural and economic development in their country.